
Exodus 33:18–34:5, Seeing God,

John 1:14-18

Much has already happened on Mount Sinai. God made a covenant with the Israelites, but when Moses tarried on the mountain, they immediately broke it. In turn Moses destroyed both the golden calf and the two stone tablets with the Ten Words. God no longer wanted to be their God, but Moses' mediation has reconciled Him. Last week we saw how He is now even willing again to travel with the people to the promised land.

1. Today's reading shows us first that God renews the covenant, see esp. Exodus 34:5 and 10. He gives new stone tablets, but the ceremony is subdued like that for a second wedding.
2. Secondly, we hear how Moses wants to see God's glory (vs.18). God turns down Moses' request, but he is still allowed to see God's back (vs. 23).

The Old Testament generally states that God is invisible to human eyes; note also the hymn we sang, 'Immortal, invisible'. Yet in certain places it is a bit ambiguous: Abraham does not see God in Genesis 15, but in Genesis 18 God appears to him in human form. Elijah does not see God in full, but he gets an impression (1 Kings 19).

3. Moses did not really see God – but we do: we see Jesus! And Jesus reveals the full glory of God, says John 1-14-18. John 1:14 and 18 emphatically use words for seeing. For this reason the Gospels remain at the heart of the Bible.

In Christ, the only Son, the glory of God has become visible like never before – and even to all people. The word glory is a key word in John's Gospel.

No less than three times in 1:14-18, John writes that we have come to know God's goodness and grace through Jesus. This is in sharp contrast with Moses' doubt whether God was favourably inclined to him (Exodus 33:12-17; 34:9).

Glory is what distinguishes God from humans: his royal majesty, honour and splendour, but also his mercy and compassion (33:19). We know it in Jesus, and we can pass this knowledge on to others.

The Son of God, who Himself is God, has made Him known to us (John 1:18). John and his friends have not only seen Jesus, but even heard and touched Him (1 John 1:1).

God's revelation in Jesus surpasses the old covenant in every respect.
